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## Nusantara: Climate Dilemmas of a “Green” Capital City in Indonesia

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### ABSTRACT

Even before Indonesia’s independence, its leaders had drafted plans to relocate the capital city. Proponents gave various reasons at different times, but with Jakarta’s stifling traffic and perennial flooding, the government is now translating visions of relocation into action. Construction of the new capital, Nusantara, is already underway in East Kalimantan province. Nusantara is an ambitious and symbolic nation-building project that positions Indonesia as an increasingly confident player on the international stage. Underpinning these plans are aims to solve the more complex environmental hazards and challenges associated with climate change. Much ink has been spilled on the social, political, and technical dimensions of Nusantara, but less scrutiny has focused on the assumptions of a climate forward capital city. As this green developmentalism takes shape, we more closely examine the climate dimensions of the project, exploring the extent of its climate mitigation impacts, while also homing in on its potential for adaptation and resilience. Our findings suggest that under the project’s current course, emissions are likely to increase significantly, worsening vulnerabilities in Jakarta and creating new ones in East Kalimantan. Nevertheless, the future remains unwritten, with many crossroads and opportunities to change direction.

**Keywords:** Nusantara, climate change, sustainable development, ecosystems

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### **Introduction: Indonesia's Ambitious Capital Move to East Kalimantan**

On Aug. 26, 2019, the President of Indonesia, Joko Widodo, announced plans to build a new capital city in faraway East Kalimantan<sup>1</sup> province on the Island of Borneo.<sup>2</sup> While capital relocation attempts were not new,<sup>3</sup> this initiative has gained meaningful traction. It drew international attention not only for the move away from Indonesia's most iconic city, Jakarta, but also for its aspiration to create an environmentally-friendly city. Under the proposed "forest city" concept, Nusantara would model future development in Indonesia and serve as a catalyst for meeting the country's ambitious climate targets and addressing urban environmental challenges. Adding to its overall symbolism, President Widodo's name for the new capital, which means "archipelago," invokes the nationalist project of bringing together island Southeast Asia (Amir, 2023).

The new city will be located between the existing cities of Balikpapan and Samarinda in the districts of Kutai Kartanegara and North Penajam Paser, largely on state forest conces-

sion lands. The total area covers 2,560 square km, which is about twice the area of New York City. The first stage of construction is planned for completion by the end of 2024 with subsequent stages built through 2045 (Normile et al. 2022). The project anticipates costs upwards of US\$32 billion, of which only 20 percent will be funded by the Indonesian government; the rest is controversially contingent on domestic and foreign investors (Beech, 2023). Despite significant forward progress under the outgoing Widodo administration, national elections contested in early 2024 created uncertainty about the future of the project, delaying opportunities to court potential financiers. Nevertheless, the decisive victory of the Prabowo-Gibran<sup>4</sup> ticket suggests that Nusantara's construction is continuing as planned. Several foreign investments—from China, Russia, and Australia—ensued post-election.<sup>5</sup>

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### **Nusantara, Climate Change, and Resilience**

Nusantara's underlying justification largely stems from the need to escape Jakarta's environ-

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- <sup>1</sup> We use Borneo to refer to the island, Kalimantan to represent the area under Indonesian jurisdiction, and East Kalimantan as the provincial jurisdiction of Nusantara development plans.
  - <sup>2</sup> The plans were legalized through the issuance of Law No. 3/2022 governing capital city development.
  - <sup>3</sup> Moving Indonesia's capital was first put forward by President Soekarno on July 17, 1957. Soekarno chose Palangkaraya as the new capital for its location in the middle of the Indonesian archipelago, while also having a large undeveloped area. During the late New Order period, in the 1990s, President Soeharto proposed moving the capital to Jonggol, but the proposal stalled. President Yudhoyono's administration revisited relocation with the growing incidence of traffic jams and flooding in Jakarta. Three options were put on the table at that time: maintaining Jakarta as the capital region and center of government by making significant infrastructure improvements; keeping the capital in Jakarta but moving the government center to another area; and building an entirely new capital city elsewhere. President Widodo's subsequent administration preferred the latter option, which laid the groundwork for Nusantara.
  - <sup>4</sup> Prabowo Subianto was elected Indonesia's president in 2024 in part under the platform of continuing Nusantara's development plans. He had previously supported land concessions linked to Nusantara capital region development. Prabowo's running mate and vice president, Gibran Rakabuming, is the son of the current president Joko Widodo.
  - <sup>5</sup> In an article for CNBC Indonesia on September 28, 2024, Emir Yanwardhana writes "As Jokowi Steps Down, the National Capital Project is Stormed by Russian-Chinese-Australian Investors [Jokowi Mau Lengser, IKN Diserbu Investor Rusia-China-Australia]"

*“Planners have envisioned Nusantara as a smart, sustainable city with net-zero carbon emissions and ample green spaces that will provide a high-quality of life for a population of 1.5 million, including a large civil service projected to relocate there.”*

mental hazards. The plans for the new capital also symbolically represent a shift away from long-standing growth policies reliant on natural resources, which is in sharp contrast to the existing realities of the proposed site. Kalimantan has long driven Indonesia’s economic growth through primary sector resource extraction coupled with agro-industrial plantations to the detriment of one of the most biodiverse tropical ecoregions of the world. Most directly linked to greenhouse gas emissions are Kalimantan’s leading role in deforestation and land use change. The island’s historical logging and widespread expansion of oil palm plantations are closely linked to some of the highest land-based emissions in the world, which occurs through the draining and oxidation of carbon-rich peatland ecosystems. In addition, East Kalimantan province is the epicenter of Indonesia’s coal industry and a major region for oil and gas production.

Since Bali’s hosting of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change Conference of the Parties in 2007, Indonesia has emerged as an outspoken voice in international climate forums, specifically for its commitment to curb emissions linked to deforestation. Indonesia’s recent Just Energy Transition and net-zero emissions policies further aim to reduce coal production, decommission high-emitting energy infrastructure, and shift to clean energy, as well as reforming the land use sector. As a global biodiversity hotspot<sup>6</sup> (Normile, 2022), Kalimantan has garnered attention for its role in climate change and has been the site of significant investments in climate mitigation projects, especially REDD+.<sup>7</sup> Building a sustainable green capital thus sends a powerful message in response to global climate challenges, embodying concerted efforts toward a more sustainable

future. This not only stems from Kalimantan’s climate mitigation potential explicitly underscored in Nusantara’s plans, but also from the climate change adaptation imperatives in building a resilient city.

Planners have envisioned Nusantara as a smart, sustainable city with net-zero carbon emissions and ample green spaces that will provide a high-quality of life for a population of 1.5 million, including a large civil service projected to relocate there (Teo 2020). Planners say future cities will implement innovations debuted in Nusantara. In addition to building the new capital, the project will also upgrade existing seaports and airports and develop new access roads to transform the region into a low carbon superhub that promotes economic development across the archipelago (Da Costa and Lamb, 2022). More broadly, the project seeks to catalyze a growth pole to the historically neglected east of Indonesia, addressing interconnectivity and cultivating a workforce under sustainable development ideals.

### **Centering Nusantara’s Climate Dilemmas**

While the architects of relocation anticipate considerable socioeconomic benefits to the region, others are concerned that broader societal and environmental challenges currently faced in Jakarta will transfer to Kalimantan, leading to negative repercussions for local wildlife, livelihoods, ecosystems, and overall environmental health (Van de Vuurst and Escobar, 2020). Some outspoken critics during the 2024 national elections argued that the move and subsequent effort to develop a green capital city is overambitious and perhaps unrealistic given the many daunting challenges. In particular, the high costs associated with the project

<sup>6</sup> The Bornean rainforest has one of the highest ecological diversities in the world, despite representing just 1 percent of the Earth’s terrestrial surface. It holds an estimated 6 percent of global biodiversity (Raes 2016; Yulandhika and Nugrahanti 2014).

<sup>7</sup> REDD+ stands for Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation. The plus also centers the role of conservation and sustainable forest management to sequester carbon stocks.

suggests a redirection of funds away from other potential programs that could benefit people and the environment in more effective ways. Furthermore, extreme climate variability and longer-term climatic changes will likely create unfavorable conditions for planned development in East Kalimantan.

Given Nusantara's grand vision and material impacts on the region's people and environment, this paper examines the broader implications of building a green city in a time of climate change. After summarizing the key motivations behind the relocation of the project, we survey the broader arguments against the move. We assess the pros and cons through a climate perspective that spans both mitigation and adaptation formulations. Finally, we evaluate the extent of likely climate variability and climate change projections, considering the broader sustainable development impacts and potential solutions for the region.

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### **Climate-driven Capital Relocation**

The Widodo administration's justifications for capital relocation explicitly center on Jakarta's environmental hazards and climate vulnerability. We briefly review these justifications below, and spotlight how discourses of climate change feature prominently.

Since the 1990s Jakarta has undergone massive urbanization. Sprawling over nearly 6,300 square kilometers and home to more than 31 million people, the Jakarta metropolitan region is Southeast Asia's most populous conurbation (Normile, 2022). Owing to the rate and scale of its growth, government services have struggled to keep up. Jakarta's chronic traffic congestion and flooding, overburdened services—such as solid waste and wastewater management—and diminishing water supply, to name a few of many issues, has called for significant interventions in recent years (World Bank, 2022).

Jakarta is highly susceptible to recurring inundations and severe flooding due to a combination of upstream and localized rain-

fall, and tidal fluctuations that converge upon a crowded region with increasingly inadequate flood management infrastructure. For example, in early 2020, over 400,000 residents were displaced and over 60 deaths were attributed to extreme flooding in the city (Berlinger and Yee, 2020; Suhartono and Goldman, 2020). Flooding has increased in intensity, extent, and magnitude in recent years, compounded by land subsidence in the northern coastal areas at rates faster than any other city in the world. Without a concerted and costly effort to limit the impacts of sinking, 25 percent of the capital could be submerged by 2050 (Normile, 2022). Climate change indicates worsening floods due to increased rainfall intensity and sea-level rise (Thiede and Gray 2017). Other environmental concerns include increased emissions from motor vehicles, a history of open waste burning and emissions from numerous nearby coal-fired power plants, which have contributed to declining air quality across the city (Van de Vuurst and Escobar, 2020).

Although environmental and climate narratives drive the justification for capital relocation, economic and political rationales are closely intertwined. Jakarta has long served as Indonesia's economic center, but the city has also come to symbolize the worst of unsustainable growth. According to the Indonesia Bureau of Statistics (BPS), in 2021, the island of Java accounted for 58 percent of the national GDP, with a significant portion concentrated in the Jakarta metropolitan region. Proponents argue that relocating the capital would not only revitalize Kalimantan but also help distribute wealth beyond Java, creating opportunities for equitable development in Indonesia's regions with the lowest development indicators (Arsi and Waluyo, 2021). Meanwhile, Widodo's presidency has emphasized the new capital city as symbolizing an evolving national identity that guides the nation's progress, fundamentally rooted in its ability to adapt to a changing climate (Hadi & Ristawati, 2020).

Architects of the move note the location as strategic for its overall geographic location

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at the center of Indonesia and proximity to a hub of growing cities with existing transportation infrastructure in Balikpapan directly to the south and Samarinda to the immediate north (Sari and Suswanta, 2023). Proponents also note the availability of convertible state and concession lands providing enough space on which to build a city. They suggest that the city will drive a development corridor to the east, thus improving economic opportunities and stimulating future growth. Although the inadequacy of water reserves has raised concern, proponents explain that the region contains sufficient access to bulk water supply due to its proximity to multiple large river systems, particularly the Mahakam river to the north. Finally, those responsible for site selection explain that the Nusantara location has less exposure to natural hazards, citing its overall distance from volcanic threats that afflict much of Indonesia, as well as its adequate distance from the coast to reduce the danger of a tsunami.

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### **Divergent Perspectives**

Despite the compelling narratives for relocating the capital from Jakarta, many have voiced concerns about the move. Critics question the validity of the claims that the move will alleviate existing problems in Jakarta, and also scrutinize the extent to which the new city can minimize its environmental footprint on Borneo. The broader question, of course, is whether such a major undertaking will be able to catalyze a sustainable development trajectory for Indonesia. The most prominent issues in the media spotlight evidence of land speculation and ongoing cases of enclosure and dispossession, along with the practical challenges of enticing reluctant state officials to move away from Jakarta.

Questions have also emerged around the motivations for the move and the process by which it was undertaken. Political approvals moved at a record pace, with the Indonesian parliament passing the new National Capital Law just 43 days after it was submitted, despite public protest over the law’s conception

(Prabowo, 2022). In addition, the communities most directly impacted by the move, such as the Indigenous Peoples and generational descendants in Nusantara’s core zone, were given limited explanation about the project and not included in key deliberations deciding their fate (Buana, 2023). Regulations provided minimal legal protection on land and property rights inciting the potential for conflict, while the expedited law is described as a pretense for eliminating dissenting voices in political decision-making (Amir, 2023).

Deterioration of environmental health conditions in Jakarta is often cited as the main impetus for relocation, but many have countered that moving the seat of government does not address Jakarta’s underlying challenges (Amir, 2023). Even by moving the capital, Jakarta will remain Indonesia’s economic center. Moving national government offices is estimated to involve about 1.5 million people out of a megapolitan region of nearly 31 million, which is unlikely to significantly alleviate Jakarta’s burdens (Normile, 2022; Amir, 2023). Government spending will still need to address Jakarta’s numerous environmental and social issues. Meanwhile, constructing a new city in East Kalimantan into which migrants have already begun streaming will create significant challenges due to the existing social and environmental issues in the region.

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### **Nusantara’s Large Environmental Footprint on Kalimantan**

Critics also express skepticism about the very idea of building a green smart city without supporting infrastructure in a primary sector heartland, especially given the broader impacts that cities can have on surrounding environments. Considering that Indonesia’s renewable energy sector provides only 11.5 percent of the country’s energy, environmental groups have rightly raised concerns that a lack of energy availability in Nusantara could mean that the nascent city will likely rely on numerous coal-fired power plants (Normile, 2022). Van de Vuurst and Escobar (2020) have estimated that

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deforestation emissions from the new capital’s direct (30 km) and indirect (200 km) footprint could be approximately 50 MtCO<sub>2e</sub> and 2326 MtCO<sub>2e</sub>, respectively, equivalent to 2.7 percent and 126 percent of Indonesia’s 2014 greenhouse gas emissions. The government has argued the development is located in degraded forest concessions and that it will actually improve rainforest landscapes. Nevertheless, even if the city were able to achieve zero net emissions, indirect impacts such as extensive air travel between the new capital and Jakarta (1,300 km away) and extractive industries that impact ecosystems beyond the city limits will undoubtedly contribute to the overall carbon footprint of the city. This is ultimately the paradox and difficulty of constructing a “green city,” since an economically vibrant city which provides a high-quality of life for the people who live there is also a city with high hidden costs of consumption impacting surrounding ecosystems that can reverberate far beyond the urban center (Teo 2020).

Environmental impacts due to land clearance and construction can be anticipated in and near the new city. Nusantara’s direct footprint could grow rapidly, expanding over 10 km from its core in less than two decades and over 30 km before mid-century (Teo et al., 2023). Road expansion is already having significant consequences to surrounding areas of the region. In the future, roads are projected to be upgraded or expanded by more than 3,300 km and 1,920 km, respectively, across Borneo (Alamgir et al., 2019). These so-called economic corridors will connect Nusantara to other growing urban areas across the island, which will ultimately facilitate the extraction and transportation of the island’s natural resources, accelerating expansion of industries such as coal, timber, and palm oil (Shira and Associates, 2011).

The potential implications for wildlife and native ecosystems of building Nusantara in one of the world’s most biologically diverse regions have yet to be fully considered (Spencer 2023). The proposed new capital is located 200 kilometers away from the sensitive Heart of Borneo ecoregion and intact forest landscapes (Teo et

al., 2023). While less than 1 percent of the critical habitat for the threatened mammal community lies within the direct impact zone (30 km radius) of the capital’s location, approximately 16 percent is located within 200 km and could potentially be affected by uncontrolled secondary impacts such as urban sprawl and associated regional development (Spencer 2023). Building new roads in biodiverse regions also opens opportunities for wildlife poaching, illegal logging, and land clearing. The Trans-Kalimantan Highway will involve deforestation of an estimated 126,000 square kilometers of one of the oldest and largest tropical rainforests in Indonesia, increasing the risk of emerging zoonotic infections, including Malaria (Bin Said et al., 2022). The impact that this large economic footprint will have on the environment is something that should not be overlooked, especially considering that Borneo is one of the world’s most important, yet most vulnerable, biodiversity hotspots and carbon sinks, which conservationists have long aimed to protect (Struebig et al 2015).

The project could also feed pre-existing problems such as the expansion of uncontrolled extractive industries, negative effects of migration, unregulated and uncontrolled urban sprawl, and harmful secondary impacts of development on ecosystems, which the initial development plans arguably do not adequately address (Teo et al., 2020; Laurance et al., 2015).

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### **Climate Scenarios Point to More Floods and Fires**

The large island of Borneo, and Southeast Asia in general, are affected by inter-annual climate-sea interactions such as the El Niño Southern Oscillation (ENSO), which brings the risk of a prolonged dry season and/or drought during the positive El Niño phase and heavy rains. This can cause landslides and floods during the negative La Niña phase (Yusuf and Francisco 2009). Kalimantan is one of the most sensitive regions in Indonesia relative to the impacts of ENSO. In addition to ENSO, rainfall in Indonesia

is also influenced by dynamics of sea surface temperature in the Indian Ocean called the Indian Ocean Dipole (IOD). These two modes also interact with one another and can amplify climate signals. For example, when a positive IOD coincides with an El Niño event, rainfall in Indonesia substantially decreases, and when a negative IOD and La Niña event occur, rainfall is significantly increased relative to when these phases do not align (Nurdiati et al. 2020).

Borneo is already experiencing new climate regimes, with future implications difficult to anticipate. Temperatures in Borneo have risen by almost 1°C over the past several decades and are projected to increase by an average of 2°C and 4°C in 2050 and 2070, respectively (Raes, 2016). Minimum temperatures are projected to increase slightly more than maximum temperatures, and thus, the diurnal temperature range (DTR) is projected to decrease gradually until the end of the twenty-first century (Saadi et al. 2020). Large increases in temperature and decreases in DTR would have a significant impact on the ecology and the biology of the island (Saadi et al. 2020). The most recent strong El Niño in 2015–2016 led to the warmest year on record, which was surpassed in 2023 (Freedman, 2023). Warmer atmospheric temperatures increase evaporation, rainfall intensity, and fire risk, as well as the timing and duration of seasonal rainfall (Purnama et al., 2019). Fires in East Kalimantan threaten national and regional health, ecosystems, and economic growth, and also imperil sustainable development because of their contribution to the increase of carbon emissions (Hidayati et al. 2020).

There is some irony in relocating the capital from Jakarta to mitigate the risks of flooding, as some areas of Borneo, including areas sited for Nusantara's development, are prone to significant flooding from heavy rainfall events. Nearby Samarinda experiences inundations in any sustained rainfall event. In 2021, during a severe flood in South Kalimantan, over 20,000 houses were damaged, and over 100,000 people were forced to relocate (Sukmara et al. 2022).

In August 2021, the Nusantara area experienced a rare extreme rainfall event during the driest month of the year, causing severe flooding and landslides (Purwaningsih et al. 2021). According to documentation from January 2019 to January 2022, there have been 45 incidents of precipitation exceeding extreme thresholds and 15 flooding events at this location (Purwaningsih et al, 2021). While Nusantara may be built through a more resilient approach, changing exposure conditions could undermine, or require additional, costly investments.

Concurrently, Kalimantan also faces other significant climate exposure. Climate extremes such as severe drought have affected water levels in dams on the north and northeast coasts of Borneo. Extreme variability of seasonal rainfall and prolonged dry seasons due to changes in climate can cause water shortages for local communities (Payus, 2020). Prolonged dry seasons triggered by El Niño have caused severe impacts on agriculture, water resources, and the environment (Nurdiati et al 2020). The convergence of droughts in areas of significant land use change spell significant risk of massive forest and wildland fires (Edwards et al., 2020).

With Borneo already prone to combustion, climate change models project an alarming increase in fire frequency and fire-related health problems, with indications suggesting emergent vectors of disease (Yulandhika and Nugrahanti, 2014). Seasonal forest and wildland fires are worsening during the dry season, especially in periods of drought concurrent with El Niño (Hidayati et al. 2020). Fire frequency is two to three times more likely in dry years than wet years (Tan et al 2020). The El Niño event in 2015 led to severe drying and fires and over the period 2015–2019. More than 5.3 million square km of land and forests were burned (Nurdiati et al 2020). Post-fire, the biogeophysical changes to albedo, evapotranspiration, and land cover can lead to an increase in temperature and a reduction in precipitation (Davies-Barnard et al 2023). These changes mean hotter, longer burning, and more dangerous fires in the future.

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Even under modest warming scenarios, up to 88 percent of protected areas will suffer from changes in climate, meaning significant impacts on ecosystem services (Scriven, 2015). Key sectors, especially those that rely on water supply or river transportation, will be hit hardest in the driest regions. Such considerations are significant because they force planners to rethink the underlying assumptions and studies that initially made sites like Nusantara seem like an ideal location for a new capital city. At the end of the twenty-first century, the worst-case scenario of more than 3°C warming is expected to have serious effects on biodiversity in Borneo in terms of species extinction, spatial distribution of species, and ecosystem health (Saadi et al. 2020). Not only will a new city accelerate impacts to ecosystems, the ecosystem services that buttress the life of a city could also become compromised in profound ways. This could take the form of loss of water quality and access, pressures on wastewater systems, stresses on energy grids, heightened environmental hazards, and many others. In looking for a refuge, future inhabitants may encounter a harsh environment.

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### **Nusantara's Sustainability Opportunities and Challenges**

Nusantara is billed as a model city that can pave the way for a greener and more sustainable economic development trajectory for Indonesia. It is an ambitious and symbolic vision of the future put forth by an ascendant nation taking on the greatest challenge of the 21st century: climate change. It is sited at the heart of frontier extraction, a region replete with un-remediated and unregulated coal mines, oil and gas infrastructure, and land use change from commodity booms ushering in landscapes of oil palm and coastlines and deltas replete with shrimp ponds. Nusantara promises to implement and incubate innovations of renewable energy and other modern infrastructure for replication not only across other Indonesian cities, but to other tropical developing countries looking to simultaneously protect their

own country's rich biological diversity (Spencer, 2023). National policies also target East Kalimantan as a priority province for mangrove rehabilitation and blue carbon initiatives.

Despite these opportunities, both the direct and indirect impacts on the environment raise legitimate concerns. Environmental degradation, coupled with environmental injustice stemming from dispossession of Indigenous residents, present clear downsides to development that deserve greater scrutiny, planning, and intervention. A well-designed city may be able to minimize its direct impact on its local environment. For example, it could potentially disincentivize land-use changes, improve water quality, reclaim and remediate degraded land, and innovate implementation of emissions reduction initiatives. For now, virtuous cycle strategies remain unclear.

Relative to more dispersed modes of settlement, cities can occupy less land, while also reducing per capita energy consumption and infrastructure costs (Lariviere, 1999), and improve resource-use efficiency (Deilmann et al. 2016). However, cities also have large ecological footprints that travel well beyond their jurisdictional boundaries as they rely on resources from distant ecosystems that also act as a sink for a city's externalities and waste (Wackernagel et al, 2006). These impacts can be as large as 200 to 1,000 times the cities' size (Teo et al., 2020). In the case of Nusantara, even if the vision of a green sustainable city is realized, the resulting secondary impacts would undoubtedly extend well beyond its city limits. It is yet to be determined if the promised economic benefits will outweigh the costs of environmental degradation because of the move.

In ideal terms, smart cities envision adopting technology to improve the local economy, transportation, and traffic management; enhance environmental protection; raise the quality of life of their citizens; and promote communication between citizens and government (Rifa'id et al, 2023). Indonesia expresses its commitment to developing clean and affordable energy in the new capital city based on the topography and

resources of Kalimantan, which is fed by the large Kayan and Mahakam rivers. There are opportunities, for example, to rethink Kayan hydropower development and further diversify sustainable economic development in this sector (Vayed and Purnomo, 2022). At the same time, the development of a smart city comes with a range of environmental, political, and socioeconomic challenges that will be difficult to address. Regardless, an ambitious smart green city will be expensive to develop. The government may need help obtaining the necessary funds not simply for its construction, but also its continued maintenance after it is realized (Ibrahim et al. 2023). More discussions are needed around exactly whom this city will be developed for.

Ultimately, the success of this project will hinge upon the choice of metrics and indicators used to evaluate progress. This is contingent upon interpretation, dueled through the politics of numbers in cost-benefit and environmental

impact analyses. A diverse group of stakeholders with different agenda assess the pros and cons differently. Will the new capital city become the sustainable forest city described in its plans, or will it merely shield political elites from accountability on larger questions and resource allocations to meet the challenges of a changing climate, while further degrading Borneo's ecosystems (see Teo, 2020)? These questions are yet unanswered. Regardless of the capital's move, the government will still need to find solutions for the projected 45 million residents in Jakarta's Metropolitan Area needing to adapt to observed and anticipated climate-induced hazards. Given the speed at which Nusantara was conceptualized and approved, the lack of stakeholder consultations during its design, and the limited general oversight across a broad range of environmental consequences, the project might even be undermined before it even becomes operational.

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